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By BEN GROSS

A Truly Amazing Broadcaster

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His Sunday school teacher was the famous night club hostess of the prohibition era, Texas Guinan. . . . He's been longer on the air as a daily network newscaster than any other person. . . . He has broadcast from such remote spots as Lhasa, Tibet, Australia's "Back of the Beyond," the Arctic, the Antarctic, and the jungles of Africa.

The author of 51 published books, the "discoverer" as far as America is concerned, of Lawrence of Arabia, a millionaire, the "father" of the movie system known as Cinerama, a maker of a new series of specials devoted to exploration soon to be seen on TV, he once taught public speaking at Princeton University. One of the students in the course at that time was Allen Dulles, who became head of the CIA.

Now, also an executive of the Capital Cities Broadcasting Corporation, and for years a Fox Movietone News narrator, at the age of 76 he is still a crack skier and mountain climber. Despite his lengthy background, he is a man of today, hip to the ideas and vagaries of the youth of 1968.

'Personality of the Year'

Who is this amazing fellow?

Well, just tune in CBS-Radio, any day this week from Monday through Friday at 6:45 P.M., and you'll hear his resonant tones. Of course, you know his name. But in the event you still don't, it's Lowell Thomas, who was recently named the "personality of the year" by the International Radio and TV Society and presented with the Distinguished Service Award of the National Association of Broadcasters.

Lowell, who made his radio bow on Sept. 25, 1930, and I were dining at a window table in the Sky Club, atop the Pan Am Building. Beneath us a million lights tinted with gold the skyscrapers of New York.

And speaking of gold, Lowell, born in Ohio, spent his boyhood in Cripple Creek, Colo., famous for the mines that produced this precious metal during the robust days of the Old West.

"My father was a mine surgeon, a great man," he said. "I sold newspapers as a boy, played baseball on a diamond that ran uphill and it was at that time I came in contact with Texas Guinan, who was the church organist. Our house had a wonderful library. It contained many books describing far away places that someday I determined to visit.

Jack Dempsey, Too

"Later on I punched cattle, worked in mines where Jack Dempsey also and was a boxer."

Then I attended the University of Northern Indiana, finished in and won my B.A. and M.A.

Now it was back to Cripple Creek and the mines again for \$90 a month, but the editor of a local newspaper offered me a job at \$95 a month and I took that. After one year, I journeyed to the big city, Denver, where I worked on a paper for a great guy, Arthur Chapman, the father of THE NEWS drama critic, John.

"While there I earned two more degrees at the University of Denver. So, equipped with these I landed on a Chicago paper and the fellow who had his desk next to mine was Ben Hecht. Too, I used to chase fires with Carl Sandburg,



LOWELL THOMAS' portrait was painted by Lady Suzanne Wilkins, widow of famed explorer Sir Hubert Wilkins.

who was a reporter on a rival sheet. "All the while, I studied law at night and also taught forensic oratory, but had no fondness for contracts and torts, so I applied for and won a scholarship at Princeton in international law. Well, after just one month there, I was a member of the faculty, teaching public speaking."

It was during World War I, that Lowell Thomas achieved his biggest break. President Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of the Interior, Franklin K. Lane, asked me to report on the American people on that conflict. He wound up in the Middle East and became the only Western observer with

Most of the world had not even heard of this legendary figure at the time. But after the war, Lowell wrote a book about him and also a volume about his adventures with British Gen. Allenby, who drove the Turks from Palestine. These became best sellers.

Big Money Lecturer

Too, Lowell became the highest paid lecturer of his day, both here and in England, where he was a social idol.

Forty nine other books followed . . . more than 10,000 radio-TV broadcasts . . . many travel films . . . and Lowell estimates that during 38 years more than \$100 million have been spent on the exploitation of his name and his numerous enterprises. Now he is writing his autobiography, having received one of the largest advance payments for it in the history of publishing.

"How did you get into broadcasting?" I asked.

"In 1930, William S. Paley, now chairman of CBS, heard that the publication, Literary Digest, was seeking a newscaster to replace the late Floyd Gibbons, the war correspondent, who

held forth on NBC. He had me give an audition.

"I spoke into a mike for 15 minutes, but did not realize that my words were being piped into the Digest office at the same time."

Didn't Teach Dewey

Well, anyway, he got the job and has been on the air daily ever since. He does his broadcasting from his estate, Quaker Hill, near Pawling, N.Y., from the New York studios of the Capital City chain or from whatever remote spots of the world he happens to be visiting at the time.

"It's often been reported that you once gave public speaking lessons to your friend, former Governor Dewey. Is that true?" I wanted to know.

"Absolutely untrue," Lowell said.

"Have you any children?"

"Yes, a son, L.T. Jr. He lives in Alaska, has been with me on many expeditions and is doing a book with me about these."

"Do you consider yourself to be a newscaster or a commentator?"

Commentator, Newscaster?

"At the beginning I was a commentator. Today, I'm both."

"Do you think that a newscaster should depart in any way from objective reporting by permitting personal opinion to color what he says?"

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